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Reclassification of COVID-19 Deaths Raises Questions

Evers Administration's Data Corrections May Be Cause for Concern

Madison, WI – The Evers Administration has consistently misreported COVID-19 fatalities of residents in Wisconsin's long-term care facilities, and Senator Patrick Testin says the Department of Health Services needs to explain why our state's data is still wrong.

"We've been told for months that residents of long-term care facilities accounted for only 30% of fatalities, even though this number was strikingly low compared to other states," said Testin. "And now we find out that the data was wrong, and nearly half of our COVID-19 deaths were in long-term care. It's a huge problem that the Evers Administration has provided flawed information as the state has worked to respond to this health crisis."

Earlier this month, the Evers Administration reclassified the housing status for many COVID-19 deaths. This reclassification resulted in the number of long-term care deaths from COVID-19 increasing by about 1,000. There are still nearly 1,700 deaths listed as occurring in an "unknown" setting and some of those may yet belong in the long-term care count.

"Other states have managed to keep and report accurate, timely data, but a year into the pandemic, Evers' DHS is still not there," said Testin. "We need to understand why DHS is taking so long to provide accurate information and whether this lack of transparency is intentional or simply incompetence."

According to a report by CBS 58, DHS does not anticipate being able to link the nearly 1,700 remaining "unknown" deaths to a location.

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